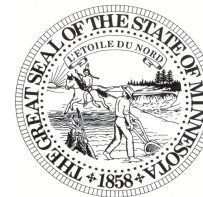




STATE OF MINNESOTA
Office of Energy Security



Issued: October 25, 2010

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

In the Matter of the Application by Xcel Energy and Great River Energy for a Route Permit for the Fargo to St. Cloud 345 kV Transmission Line Project
PUC Docket Number: E002, ET2/TL-09-1056; OAH Docket No. 15-2500-20995-2

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that a public hearing will be held on behalf of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) on the Xcel Energy and Great River Energy route permit application for a new 345 kV transmission line facility. The public hearing will be held at the times and locations noted below. Ending times reflect the latest a public hearing will run. Hearings may conclude earlier where all attendees have had the opportunity to comment and all other business has been concluded.

PUBLIC HEARING DATES & LOCATIONS

| | 12:30-3:30 pm | 6:30-9:30 pm |
|-------------------|---|--|
| November 16, 2010 | Barnesville Barnesville Assumption Church 307 Front Street North | Fergus Falls Bigwood Event Center 952 Western Avenue |
| November 17, 2010 | Breckenridge Breckenridge City Hall 420 Nebraska Avenue | Elbow Lake Elbow Lake Community Center 119 Central Avenue North |
| November 18, 2010 | Alexandria Broadway Ballroom 115 30th Avenue East | Alexandria Broadway Ballroom 115 30th Avenue East |
| November 30, 2010 | Sauk Center Sauk Centre City Hall 320 Oak Street South | Melrose Area Public School Auditorium 546 North 5th Avenue East |
| December 1, 2010 | Albany Paul's Par-A-Dice 451 Railroad Avenue | Cold Spring Rocori High School Auditorium 534 5th Avenue North |
| December 2, 2010 | St. Joseph El Paso Sports Bar and Grill 200 2nd Avenue NW | St. Cloud Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites 75 South 37th Avenue |

The evidentiary hearing will convene on December 6, 2010, at the Public Utilities Commission in Saint Paul and will continue on December 7 through 17, 2010, as necessary to complete the hearing.

Project Description

Xcel Energy and Great River Energy have submitted an Application to construct a new 345 kV high voltage transmission line (HVTL) between the Red River, either at a location south of Moorhead or south of Breckenridge, and the new Quarry Substation west of St. Cloud. The Minnesota portion of the proposed Fargo to St. Cloud 345 kV Project will be approximately 169 to 180 miles long, extending from the Red River to the existing Alexandria Switching Station located south of Alexandria and to the new Quarry Substation to be located in St. Joseph. The North Dakota portion of the Project from a new Bison Substation west of Fargo to the Red River, depending on the route selected, will be approximately 31 to 81 miles.

The proposed structures will primarily include single-pole, double-circuit capable, self-weathering or galvanized steel structures that will range in height between 130 and 175 feet. The span length between structures will range between 600 and 1,000 feet depending on site-specific considerations. Although the proposed line will be built using double-circuit capable poles, only one circuit will be installed for this Project. The second position will be left available for a future additional circuit, as per the Commission's Certificate of Need (CN) Order. The right-of-way for the proposed 345 kV electrical transmission line will generally be 150 feet in width.

Construction of the Project is expected to begin in 2014 and be completed and in service by the first quarter of 2015.

Route Permit

Under the Power Plant Siting Act (Minn. Statute 216E.03, subd. 2), a route permit from the Commission is required to build a high-voltage transmission line. A high-voltage transmission line is a conductor of electric energy and associated facilities designed for and capable of operation at a nominal voltage of 100 kilovolts (kV) or more and is greater than 1,500 feet in length. A route permit application for the proposed 345 kV transmission line project was filed by the applicants on October 1, 2009, and was accepted as complete by the Commission on November 13, 2009. The Office of Energy Security (OES) staff prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the proposed project. The Draft EIS discusses potential impacts of the project, evaluates alternatives, and suggests mitigation.

Electronic versions of the Route Permit Application, Draft EIS, and other documents relevant to this matter are available for viewing or download at the Commission website at:

<http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=25053> or eDockets at:
<https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/search.jsp> ("09" year and "1056" number).

Public Hearing

The purpose of the public hearing is to receive comments from members of the public and to compile the record for the Commission to consider in making a final decision on the transmission line route permit request. The ALJ will write a report and make a recommendation to the Commission on which route to authorize and on any appropriate permit conditions. The Commission will make a final decision on the route permit at a subsequent Commission meeting.

Administrative Law Judge. Administrative Law Judge (ALJ), Beverly Jones Heydinger will preside at the hearings. Her address and contact information is: Office of Administrative Hearings, P.O. Box 64620, 600 North Robert Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55164-0620, Phone: (651) 361-7900, Fax: (651) 361-7936.

Written Comments. Written comments regarding the route permit should be submitted directly to Judge Heydinger. Comments may be submitted by U.S. Mail, fax or email. **Comments will be accepted through January 5, 2011**, and should include the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) Docket Number 15-2500-20995-2. Mailed comments must be postmarked by that date. Emails should be sent to routecomments.oah@state.mn.us. Faxed, emailed, and delivered comments must be received by 4:30 P.M. on that date.

Office of Administrative Hearing Rules. The ALJ will conduct the contested case hearings in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 14, and the Office of Administrative Hearings procedural rules for the Commission's energy facility permitting process (Minnesota Rules, Chapter 1405). The applicable statutes and rules are available on the Office of the Revisor of Statutes webpage at: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov>. Statutes and rules may also be purchased at Minnesota's Bookstore, 660 Olive St., St. Paul, Minn. 55155, or telephone at (651) 297-3000.

Conduct of Hearing. At the start of each hearing session, the ALJ will explain the procedural rules for the hearing, including the sequence for providing testimony and questioning witnesses. Members of the public may participate without the necessity of intervening as a party. Representation by legal counsel is permitted but not required. Participation includes: a) offering direct testimony; b) offering testimony or other material in written form at or following the hearing; and c) questioning witnesses.

Any person who wishes to question a witness, but does not want to ask the questions, may submit questions in writing to the ALJ, who will then question the witness. Questions may be submitted during the hearing or may be sent to the ALJ in advance of the hearing. A transcript of the proceedings will also be available.

Continuation of Hearing. The ALJ may elect to recess the hearing and set additional days for hearing, if necessary.

Request for Accommodation. Any person who needs an accommodation for a disability in order to participate in the hearing, and any person who requires an interpreter, including a foreign language interpreter, should promptly notify the Office of Administrative Hearings, P.O. Box 64620, 600 North Robert Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55164-0620, Phone: (651) 361-7900 (voice) or (651) 361-7878 (TDD).

Identified Parties. The parties to this proceeding identified on the date of this Notice are as follows:

Applicants

Xcel Energy, Darrin Lahr, 414 Nicollet Mall, MP-8A, Minneapolis, MN 55401, 1-800-238-7968, fargoinfo@capx2020.com.

Great River Energy, Dan Leshner, 12300 Elm Creek Boulevard, Maple Grove, MN 55369-4718, 1-888-473-2279, dlesher@grenergy.com.

Intervenors

At the intervention deadline of October 8, 2010, five (5) parties had intervened in the proceeding:

NoCapX 2020, United Citizens Action Network and North Route Citizens Alliance, Carol A. Overland, Overland Law Office, P.O. Box 176, Red Wing, MN 55066, (612) 227-8638, overland@legalelectric.org.

Avon Township, Gerald W. Von Korff, Rinke Noonan, P.O. Box 1497, St. Cloud, MN 56302, (320) 251-6700, jvonkorff@rnoon.com.

St. John's Abbey/University, Michael J. Ford, Quinlivan & Hughes, P.O. Box 1080, St. Cloud, MN 56302, (320) 251-1414, mford@quinlivan.com.

OES Legal Counsel

Karen Finstad Hammel, Minnesota Attorney General's Office, 1400 Bremer Tower, 445 Minnesota Street, St. Paul, MN 55101-2127, Phone (651) 757-1248, Fax (651) 297-1138, karen.hammel@state.mn.us.

Project Contacts

If you have questions or would like further information about this project please contact OES staff. David Birkholz (david.birkholz@state.mn.us, (651) 296-2878) is the State Permit Manager and Ray Kirsch (raymond.kirsch@state.mn.us, (651) 296-7588) is the Public Advisor. The public advisor is available to answer questions about the permitting procedures and how to effectively participate in the process, but does not provide legal advice. The address for staff is: Minnesota Office of Energy Security, 85 7th Place East, Suite 500, St. Paul, MN 55101-2198.

This document can be made available in alternative formats (i.e., large print or audio) by calling 651.296.0406 (voice). Persons with hearing or speech disabilities may call us through Minnesota Relay at 1.800.627.3529 or by dialing 711.